

OHIO AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION  
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THE FUTURE DEMAND FOR WOOD PRODUCTS

Remarks at the dedication of the Wood Utilization Research Laboratory,  
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A. W. Greeley, Regional Forester  
U. S. Forest Service, Region 9  
Milwaukee 3, Wisconsin

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I did not come primarily to make a speech. I came to extend the congratulations of the U. S. Forest Service to the State of Ohio, the Agricultural Experiment Station, and the staff of the Department of Forestry on this fine new wood utilization facility. And now that I've seen it, I particularly want to congratulate all who had a hand in its coming into being for your ability to obtain so much building for such a relatively small outlay of money. However Dr. Diller, with his characteristic persuasiveness, convinced me that since I planned to be here anyway I ought to have a thought or two to pass along. And perhaps I have.

So, first of all, may I extend congratulations to all of you people who had a hand in bringing about this new wood utilization laboratory. These things don't just happen. Someone, or several someones, worked long and earnestly to realize the sort of dream that this building represents. To Dr. Diller, Dr. Rummell, the other staff people who worked on it, and to the people of the State of Ohio, please accept congratulations from one of the Federal agencies that is interested in, and enthusiastic about, what you are doing and will do here.

I cannot speak from the point of view of an expert in wood utilization. I look at this laboratory, and the potential it represents, from the point of view of one who is concerned with management of forest land. There is a good deal of difference. The technical expert in wood utilization necessarily thinks of properties of wood, and what he can do within the framework of strength, texture, resistance to failure, ease of handling, and the other characteristics that define and identify a particular species or particular piece of wood. A land manager thinks of the raw material out of which that piece of wood came, and, in turn, of the problems on the land which produced that piece of wood. As a land manager, I very clearly see that these wood utilization research facilities, and the abilities of the people who will staff them, will be needed for a long time here in this State. I hope the people of the State of Ohio will enthusiastically support this activity.

These facilities will be needed, urgently, because of the pressure which our exploding population will place on our resource base. This group here today is familiar with estimates that are being publicized about the rate at which our population is increasing. Everyone seems to be making estimates these days. You know that over the nation as a whole our net rate of population increase is one person every 11 seconds; that by the year 1975 our population will be up to at least 215,000,000; and that by the year 2000 our population will be up to at least 275,000,000 and probably more. Within the State of Ohio, on the authority of figures used by the Ohio Forestry Association, there is an increase of one person about every two minutes. That means that the population of the State of Ohio will about double between 1950 and 1975. It means that population in the State of Ohio is increasing at a rate which is above the national average.

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Now by itself this increase in population, which is of really staggering proportions, won't necessarily require wood utilization research facilities. But people seem to have a habit of using wood. The historic trend in use of wood has been up. That is, total amount of wood used tends to increase, and more significantly the per capita rates of consumption tend to increase. Now, if there is no further per capita increase, but if per capita consumption of wood and paper products holds its own, this tremendous increase in the number of people will necessarily result in a greatly expanded demand for forest products of all kinds. And that is the reason we need to be concerned about our future ability to meet the product demands of this booming population.

A recent Timber Resource Review study by the Forest Service estimates that by the year 2000 the wood requirements of our country will be nearly double what they are now. This general outline of this forecast is very solidly supported. The preciseness of the figures is not necessarily important.

Now, in the State of Ohio there are 5 million acres of commercial forest land that are not producing too well. Of the trees that are of sawlog size, one tree out of each five standing is a cull. Of the standing sawtimber volume, about 80% is in grades below No. 1 and No. 2 sawlog. That means that only 20% of the timber contains grades that are attractive to sawmill operators now. That also means that the outlook for industry users who depend on a quality product measured in board foot is not too rosy.

But the State of Ohio is so located that there are markets of all sorts within relatively close shipping distance. And while the 80% of the standing timber that is in No. 3 sawlog grade, or poorer, represents a resource which is not attractive to a sawmilling industry, it is a resource that can be attractive for industry that can use wood in cubic volume, that is cubic feet of wood fiber. New pulping processes are still being developed. Recent processing developments make the low grade material that grows in Ohio's forests a desirable raw material for some pulping processes.

Ohio's forest lands can make a significant contribution to the economy of the State if - and this is a big IF - they can be rendered productive. It will take men like the staff of this research laboratory to perform part of the magic that must be performed if all of Ohio's wood resource now standing on Ohio's forest lands is to play a role in contributing as a raw material to a future wood fiber industry here.

I have a brother who is younger than I am. He is also smarter than I am. When we were growing up together, our mother used to assign us chores to do around the house on Saturday morning. Sometimes she would promise to have freshly-baked cookies for us when we finished. I particularly remember one spring morning when I had busily scurried through the list of things that I was to do and was very put out to find that my brother was working rather disinterestedly on only the second task on his list. This was a morning when cookies were to be waiting for us. So, with some feeling of being put upon, I started in to help my brother work on his list of tasks.

Before we were through, I decided I had done enough and went into the house and claimed my cooky. Then like a poor sport I went out where my brother was working and ate the warm, delicious, oatmeal cooky in his presence.

Pretty soon my brother, still with uncompleted tasks on his list, went into the house and presently came out likewise munching on a cooky. I almost dropped mine in surprise. Then, this wise youngster said to me, "I didn't hurry to get new work done today just so as to get a new cooky. I knew all along that any time I wanted I could go get some of last week's cookies."

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Too many laboratories, and research stations, are loaded with last week's cookies - the results of previously completed research work not put to use.

I am not here to say whether that is a responsibility of this laboratory, and this experiment station, or not. But one of the great gaps in the field of science today is our failure to provide a means by which there is ready communication of completed research ideas to those who can use them. I hope that the people of the State of Ohio will not let this new wood utilization research laboratory work itself into a cupboard for the storage of "last week's cookies."

The demand for forest products, countrywide, will run high throughout the lifetime of all of us who are here. That will be reason enough for a facility like this. But this laboratory and its staff are important for an even better reason. The condition of Ohio's woodlands, and the lands in Ohio that should be woodlands, cry out for help from trained research technicians in the wood utilization field. I salute the people of this State, and the staff of this Agricultural Experiment Station, for having the wisdom to see this broad problem in that light.

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